

Marion B Sulzberger's Legacy, Or the Privilege of Learning: Remarks on Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of His Death — A Perspective from Abroad

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Skin... next to the human brain, probably the most complex as well as the most uniquely human of all organs (Sulzberger).

The memory of this great mind should allow us to deliberate on learning, experience, research and its governing principles.

Fascination is the power and act of imagination intensive upon other bodies than the body of the imaginant... (Francis Bacon 1561–1626) (Bacon, 1928).

We dermatologists are fascinated by skin. Skin is our world, our arena, our substrate, where our senses meet, where our thoughts and our dreams become manifest, and Marion Baldur Sulzberger was a fascinating personality. Not only did he liken himself to this Germanic god, the shiny God of Good and Light, *Baldur* (Sulzberger, 1986), a name suggested by his elder sister Tilly, reading stories of Norse Walhalla at the time of his birth. He was as shiny a personality himself, mesmerizing any audience.

The history of medicine, dermatology in particular, during the 20th century has proven that just skin is a field where access to the questions of human physiology and pathology is much easier and more reproducible than in other organs of the body, let aside psychology.

To the delight of European readers, our editor is going *classic*. Caesar (Goldsmith, 2002a) and Francis Bacon (Goldsmith, 2002b) are quoted in recent issues of the JID. *Apophthegma* meaning something like aphorism, is an expression used by Bacon himself four centuries ago. At this special occasion it may be permitted to extrapolate on such and the points addressed.

The parts of human learning have reference to the three parts of Man's Understanding, which is the seat of learning: History to his Memory, Poesy to his Imagination, and Philosophy to his Reason (Bacon, 1928).

Marion said that he liked the classics, Latin, languages, and his biography even displays lines of his own verse. Europe, Australia, South America; learning German, Spanish, French; a stint in the US Naval Service in WWI; medical school in Geneva; education with celebrities like Bruno Bloch and Joseph Jadassohn; in the military again in WWII; an outstanding career in academia, outline a profile which doesn't easily find a parallel. The impetuous character of his emotions becomes clear when perusing his memoirs, —and his influence on an audience, electrifying as it was, is still before the mind of all those who experienced it.

Poetry, *poesy* in Bacon's spelling, doth truly refer to the Imagination; which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature has severed, and sever that which

nature has joined, and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things.

Marion's activities demonstrate the limitless ambitions and abilities the human mind can fill. Professor and chairman at NYU, after retirement in San Francisco and in the Letterman Army Institute for research, advisor to the US Government, president of the ICD, founding member of the SID, later its president and first editor of the JID, president of the ADA, Knight of the Légion d'Honneur, etc. etc. Not to mention his achievements in dermatology, allergy, and immunology, which speak for themselves. Like a giant Langerhans Cell stretching his dendrites to all branches of skin research, public health and world medicine, he occupied a central position in our world of skin, a veritable *sans-pareil*. A product of Jewish scholarly tradition and individual sagacity of mind in 20th century America.

Marion was quadrilingual at least, a capability which cannot be estimated highly enough. Let me jump to another Bacon for a moment: Roger B. (1219–1292) (Burke, 1928). In his treatise "Study of Tongues" he emphasizes the overall importance of reading original texts and quotes at least six different kinds of misunderstanding if this cannot be undertaken: a wrong word, a wrong spelling, a wrong accent, a wrong diphthong, a wrong pronunciation, a wrong exegesis, etc. Marion was in no danger in this respect, owing to his education and his life's experience. A position in life and in the universal world of skin as became his could not have been achieved without this versatility in thinking and wording, without this incessant lifelong exercise and work.

Posterity eventually was bereaved of his genius on Thanksgiving Day 20 years ago.

dor holekh w-dor ba — we read in Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) (I:4) **דור הלק ודור בא** — "one generation goes, one generation comes" — and we must accept it, grateful to have had him around to enrich our world.

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